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Chairman: Mr. Effah-Apenteng (Ghana)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 130: Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (*continued*)

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Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the follow-up investigation into possible fee-splitting arrangements between defence counsel and indigent detainees at the International Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (A/56/836)

1. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the follow-up investigation into possible fee-splitting arrangements between defence counsel and indigent detainees at the International Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (A/56/836), recalled that an earlier OIOS investigation had found evidence that the legal aid system of both Tribunals had been abused and that some former or current defence counsel had either been solicited or had accepted requests for fee-splitting made to them by their respective clients. He noted with satisfaction that both Tribunals had implemented most of the 16 recommendations contained in the report of OIOS (A/55/579) and had initiated action to implement the remaining recommendations.

2. During its follow-up investigation, conducted between October 2001 and January 2002, OIOS had found evidence that one former defence counsel at the International Tribunal for Rwanda had received but rejected a detainee's request for fee-splitting and had resigned as counsel. There was also evidence that another counsel at the same Tribunal had agreed to a similar request at the time that it was made but had later claimed that the arrangement had not been implemented. Based upon evidence provided by OIOS, the Registrar had determined that the counsel in question had submitted inflated bills to the Tribunal and had therefore discharged him from the case. In consultation with OIOS, the Registrar was also investigating a report from a current counsel that he had declined a request from a client to split fees and had asked the Registrar to withdraw him from the case. OIOS also found evidence that a Tribunal staff member, whose responsibilities included the review of the financial statements submitted by defence team members, had requested and received kick backs (in the form of cash payments and cheques) from several defence team members in order to process their claims in an expeditious manner. The staff member had admitted his corrupt actions.

3. In addition, OIOS had found that one accused person, who had successfully claimed indigence and was represented by a defence team funded by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, had purchased real estate while in detention. Both Tribunals had been provided with draft copies of the report under consideration and their comments and suggestions had been evaluated and incorporated accordingly. In view of the importance of the matter, OIOS would continue to actively pursue it in close consultation with both Registries.

4. **Ms. Nakian** (United States of America) noted with satisfaction that the two Tribunals had implemented most of the recommendations contained in the previous report of OIOS (A/55/759) and had taken additional proactive steps to prevent abuses of the legal aid system established under their respective statutory authorities. Her delegation applauded the Registrar's discharge of a counsel and the decision to communicate that decision to the President of the Law Society of the counsel's State. The new investigative findings revealed in the most recent report, however, were a matter of grave concern and her delegation demanded assurances that prompt action was being taken to rectify both past and ongoing abuses. It was extremely dismayed to learn that the staff member of the International Tribunal for Rwanda, who had admitted his corrupt action, had merely been

reassigned to other duties at the Tribunal. Her delegation was stunned to learn that the individual was still on the payroll and wished to have an explanation of that and any other cases that showed a lack of accountability.

5. At the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, it was a scandal that an accused person, who had successfully claimed indigence and was represented by a defence team funded by the Tribunal, had purchased valuable real estate while in detention. Her delegation supported the recommendation of OIOS that both Tribunals should formulate a working definition of indigence and define "sufficient means" in relation to maximum financial limits on the assets owned by a suspect. It also supported the recommendation that both Tribunals should assign a full-time investigator to investigate claims of indigence, including asset tracing and possible relations between defence team members and the accused person. Both Tribunals were encouraged to make implementation of that recommendation a top priority and to accelerate efforts to revise their Code of Professional Conduct for Defence Counsel to specifically prohibit fee-splitting arrangements and impose sanctions for breaches of the rule.

6. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), replying to the comments made by the representative of the United States of America, said that the staff member who had admitted receiving kick backs had been suspended from duty not reassigned, pending the institution of charges against him.

Agenda item 123: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*)

Estimates in respect of matters of which the Security Council is seized (A/56/7/Add.8 and A/C.5/56/25/Add.3)

7. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on estimates in respect of matters of which the Security Council is seized (A/C.5/56/25/Add.3), said that the estimated requirements for the first 17 political missions relating to matters of which the Security Council was seized amounted to $37,858,600. The requirements for the two additional missions, namely, the Expert Panel on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the monitoring mechanism established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1363 (2001), and extended and assigned pursuant to resolution 1390 (2002), amounted to $3,599,900. In its resolution 56/255, the General Assembly had approved a charge of $11,113,400 in partial requirements for the first 17 missions and the balance that was pending approval by the General Assembly amounted to $30,345,100.

8. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's ninth report on estimates in respect of which the Security Council is seized (A/56/7/Add.8), said that, in December 2001, the Advisory Committee had considered three reports of the Secretary-General concerning estimates in respect of matters of which the Security Council is seized (A/C.5/56/25 and Add.1 and 2) containing proposed resource requirements for 17 special political missions, for which it had recommended partial funding. The Secretariat had submitted its reports rather late and the Advisory Committee had intended to examine in detail the estimates they contained. The Advisory Committee had had a very useful meeting with the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and his senior officials and intended to continue to have such meetings in the future.

9. In its report, the Advisory Committee offered a number of suggestions for improving future reports on special missions and for submitting them much earlier to enable the Advisory Committee to discharge its responsibility. Reports should also contain full justification of requested resources. Moreover, before an office was established, a thorough analysis should be made of the various options available to the Secretary-General with a view to optimizing results and guarding against the possibility of establishing offices that were poorly funded, poorly staffed, stretched to the limit and therefore only minimally effective. As indicated in paragraph 24 of its report and bearing in mind the observations and recommendations contained in the report, the Advisory Committee recommended approval of a charge of $41,458,500, inclusive of the amount of $11,113,400 approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/255.

10. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Advisory Committee's report contained a number of important recommendations, such as those contained in paragraphs 5 and 6. The recommendation contained in

paragraph 9 was acceptable but raised questions about closer cooperation between the United Nations and other actors in the field. In that connection, he would welcome clarification of how the Advisory Committee interpreted the expression "other actors in the field". He noted in paragraph 13 that the Advisory Committee had requested a clarification of the role of the Department of Political Affairs, Peacekeeping Operations and Management in the administration of funds for special political missions and would welcome an explanation from the Secretariat of why no response had been provided thus far. He would also welcome clarification of the Advisory Committee's intention in paragraph 17 of its report, in which some of the Committee's substantive comments on requested resources were not set out in bold type. Lastly, he wondered why most of the special political missions were headquartered in New York instead of in the field.

11. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), replying to the question raised by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic concerning paragraph 13 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/56/7/Add.8), said that, in order to avoid duplication and enhance coordination, one department often provided logistical and administrative services in the field on behalf of another. With regard to the headquarters of special political missions, most but not all such missions were field-based. Because of the nature of their activities, however, one or two of them were authorized by the Security Council to be headquartered in New York.

12. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), also replying to questions posed by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, said, with reference to the recommendation contained in paragraph 9 of the report, that the Advisory Committee did not mean to suggest that the political reporting mandate of missions should be outsourced. There were certain functions, however, such as payroll processing and recruitment, where the facilities of other agencies of the United Nations system in the mission area might be used. By "other actors in the field", the Advisory Committee meant funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations.

13. With reference to paragraph 17, the Advisory Committee could not question the mandate of a mission authorized by the Security Council. The Secretary-General, however, must clearly indicate the nature of the mandate for which he was requesting resources. The Advisory Committee had found that a great deal of information was provided to assist the Security Council in determining the mandate of the mission, but relatively little information was provided in support of the Secretary-General's request for funds.

14. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) asked what was the ratio of support/logistic personnel to substantive personnel in missions. The implication of paragraph 9 of the Advisory Committee's report was that the cost of the logistics and support component of missions was too high and he wondered whether the Advisory Committee could propose any ways in which the amount could be reduced.

15. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation agreed with the Chairman of the Advisory Committee that reports of the Secretary-General should contain a much clearer statement of the exact mandate of missions as authorized by the Security Council. He did not, however, question the nature of the mandate of special political missions authorized by the Council. On the question of special political missions headquartered in New York, it would be helpful if the Secretariat could provide additional information about the specific nature of such missions.

16. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), replying to the question raised by the representative of the United States, said that the Advisory Committee recognized that by their very nature small missions had high administrative costs and that reductions in those costs were not always possible. He cited the example of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic, whose total estimated requirements for 2002 were $4,628,500, even though estimates for substantive programmes totalled only $463,300. While the Advisory Committee did not recommend a reduction in the amounts requested, it recalled its recommendation that the establishment of new missions should be accompanied by an analysis of whether the establishment of the mission was the best option under the circumstances and by a review of the various options available to the Secretary-General.

Agenda item 158: Financing of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (A/56/660, A/56/688 and A/56/845)

17. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) introduced the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Budget for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the period from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002" (A/56/660). The budget of $537 million, submitted to the General Assembly in November 2001, had been based on an authorized strength of 5,537 military personnel, including 1,710 civilian personnel. It covered the requirements for phase II of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). At a recent meeting, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) had been informed that the revised estimates could be reduced to $533.88 million. Since the amount currently appropriated for MONUC was $393.23 million, the General Assembly should appropriate an additional $140.65 million.

18. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) introduced the report of the Advisory Committee entitled "Proposed budget of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo" (A/56/845). The Advisory Committee would examine the estimates for the period starting 1 July 2002 and report to the Fifth Committee at the second part of the Assembly's resumed session. It recommended an appropriation of $450 million for MONUC, including the amount already appropriated by the General Assembly. Considering the stage reached by the various elements of the peace process, the Advisory Committee was aware that the full resources requested were unlikely to be required during the final six months of the current financial period. Indeed, under-expenditures traditionally arose during the first or second formative financial periods of peacekeeping missions. Approximately $250 million would be reported as under-expenditure for the period ending 30 June 2001.

19. The issue of contractual services for the air operations of MONUC merited the urgent and proactive attention of the Fifth Committee. The report offered various options for remedying the situation when the term of the current contract ended on 30 June 2002.

20. **Mr. Soto Gúrpide** (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, welcomed the report of the Advisory Committee on the proposed budget of MONUC, but expressed concern at its late submission. The late submission of budget reports for peacekeeping operations was a recurring problem which the Secretariat should address without delay.

21. The European Union and associated countries strongly supported the Secretary-General's efforts to bring lasting peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and recognized that the tasks assigned to the United Nations under the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement required careful preparation and financial support. They also recognized the particular constraints affecting MONUC, in addition to the difficulties inherent in producing a budget for any such mission. While it was essential for MONUC to be adequately financed, the Advisory Committee had rightly observed that there was much to criticize in the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/660).

22. Clear narratives were important to enable Member States to take the right budgetary decisions. The European Union and associated countries supported the Advisory Committee's comments on that issue, particularly with regard to the administrative component of MONUC. They also accepted the Advisory Committee's recommendation not to reduce post levels, even though the justification provided for most new posts was inadequate. The Secretariat should make every effort to rectify those shortcomings in its next budget document.

23. The mismanagement in the award of the air service contract to Pacific Architects and Engineers Inc. PAE/Daher was a matter of great concern. If the information contained in the Advisory Committee's report was confirmed, a full explanation would be required, including the reason for choosing a company which had not produced the lowest bid. The information requested by the Advisory Committee should be provided immediately, rather than in the next budget document. Similar problems had arisen in the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and ways of protecting the Organization from such mismanagement and the resulting costs should therefore be explored.

24. Lastly, the report of the Advisory Committee had revealed a number of areas in which improvements were still urgently needed, including the timely signing of memorandums of understanding, the verification of contingent-owned equipment, and the issue of gender mainstreaming. The European Union and associated countries would be pursuing those and other matters during the second part of the Assembly's resumed session. He wished to know whether the figure of $450 million mentioned in the Advisory Committee's report for the period from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002 was a gross figure and, if so, what the net amount would be.

25. **Mr. Agyeman** (Ghana), stressing the seriousness of the political and security challenges confronting MONUC, said that it was his delegation's hope that the Assembly would meet the Mission's operational needs, thereby empowering it to effectively assist in restoring peace and stability to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The country's population might then devote its energies to nation-building.

26. The Mission's failure to comply with outsourcing policies and procurement procedures in awarding the air service contract was a matter of serious concern. Such a gross dissipation of resources was particularly regrettable at a time when the international community was calling for more resources to enable the United Nations to play an effective and efficient role. His delegation could not accept the explanation of "operational necessity", considering that more than nine months had elapsed from the time that the Field Administration and Logistics Division had indicated the need for the contract and the initiation of firm action by the Procurement Division. It also failed to understand the exigencies of the circumstances, given that a much lower bid of $24.5 million had been ignored in favour of an inappropriately high bid of $34 million. In the given case, the requirement of economy would surely have coincided with the need for effectiveness and efficiency.

27. His delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the current contract term should not be renewed and that a comprehensive review of the entire contract for airfield services should be conducted. The Board of Auditors, for its part, should ensure that such lapses were not a systemic concern for other peacekeeping missions. His delegation was currently assessing the recommendation that airfield contracts should be awarded to more than one provider.

28. Given the lack of focus in the programme narratives of the budget proposals, his delegation would welcome the use of a results-based budgeting format.

29. The fact that such a sizeable air service contract had not been mentioned in the list of contract services called into question the integrity of documents submitted for consideration. It was also a matter of concern that the Advisory Committee had not received the information on service contracts that it had requested.

30. While recognizing the administrative and logistical challenges facing MONUC, his delegation agreed that the proposed level of support services appeared excessive. It also supported the need for clear linkages between requested posts and workload indicators. To ensure that mission resources were effectively deployed, MONUC should be encouraged to implement the Advisory Committee's recommendations on cost-saving measures.

31. The inter-Congolese dialogue had the potential to provide a firm basis for the deployment of phase III of the Mission in the country's eastern region. Adequate resources should also be allocated for the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Programme (DDR) His delegation could also endorse the additional $56.76 million for MONUC for the period from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002.

32. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that he was shocked that the report before the Committee had not been introduced by a representative of the Secretary-General. Summary records from previous sessions confirmed that reports on peacekeeping missions had in the past been introduced by a representative of the Secretary-General. He intended to raise the issue again at a later stage.

33. **The Chairman** said that he had given the floor to the Controller to introduce the report of the Secretary-General before giving the floor to the representative of the Advisory Committee.

34. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that it was the first time that a report of the Advisory Committee on the financing of a peacekeeping mission had come to the attention of his delegation. Given that it raised important questions concerning, inter alia, the preparation of budget documents, the clarity of

recommendations and the structure of the Mission, he had expected an official reply from a representative of the Secretary-General. His delegation was merely concerned to ensure the success of the Mission.

35. **The Chairman** said that, as with other items, there would be an opportunity to continue the general discussion during informal consultations. Relevant Secretariat officials would be available in due course to reply to any questions.

36. **Mr. Kelapile** (Botswana) said that the Mission should be provided with funding on a timely, predictable basis, pursuant to the relevant General Assembly resolutions. The financial and administrative arrangements of all peacekeeping missions must also be given equal treatment. Given the importance of the inter-Congolese dialogue, the efforts to strengthen the office of the neutral facilitator were particularly welcome, since adequate preparedness and reliable resources were required to ensure effective implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement.

37. He was encouraged by the European Union's recent declaration of commitment to MONUC, in particular its pledge to advocate adequate financial resources for the Mission during the current review of its budget.

38. His delegation supported most of the recommendations contained in the Advisory Committee's report, including the importance of improving the format of future budget documents and providing clear justification of posts and other resource requirements. It also noted the Advisory Committee's intention to provide additional comments in its comprehensive report on peacekeeping and looked forward to receiving clarification on a number of matters, especially those relating to quick impact projects and gender issues.

39. Neither the complexity nor the desperate nature of the country's situation could justify the contravention of due process in procurement practices and the award of air service contracts. Such irregularities could result in significant financial losses to the Organization.

40. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that his delegation concurred with the comments made by the representatives of Spain and Ghana and shared the concerns expressed by several speakers about the Mission's administrative component. Given the difficulty of implementing the Lusaka Agreement, it was particularly important to ensure that MONUC was well organized. Considering the crucial role of the inter-Congolese dialogue, it was also important to ensure that personnel were effectively and efficiently deployed. The poor justification for new posts was thus a matter of concern, as was the reported mismanagement of the air service contract. He trusted that additional explanations would be provided in due course.

41. With regard to the Mission's budget, a results-based budgeting format would certainly be preferable. Having advocated the expansion of MONUC in the Security Council, his delegation supported the $450 million recommended by the Advisory Committee.

42. He hoped that the Mission would soon be forthcoming with information on the number of foreign troops and armed militias on the ground. MONUC should also propose effective measures for the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Programme, which would prove critical in the subsequent phase of the budget.

43. **Mr. Kandanga** (Namibia) stressed the importance of adequate justification of resources, which should be commensurate with the needs of the Mission. The proposed gender and child protection units must be assured appropriate staffing levels to ensure the effective coordination of mandates. The office of the neutral facilitator was crucial to the peace process and should thus also be allocated appropriate resources.

44. The mismanagement of the air service contract was indeed a matter of great concern, which was why various solutions, including a resubmission to tender at the end of the first year, should be considered.

45. **Mr. Soto Gurpide** (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, noted a slight contradiction between the English and Spanish versions of the Advisory Committee's report, (A/56/845) and said that the Spanish text should prevail.

46. **Mr. Chandra** (India) said that his delegation saw three sets of issues to be addressed: format and presentation, justification of posts and procurement. The Advisory Committee's recommendations provided a way forward and would enhance transparency. In that connection, it would be useful to know what

implications the $85 million reduction in the budget would have on its implementation.

47. **Mr. Fox** (Australia) requested clarification of the background of the decision to reverse the reduction in mission subsistence allowance and whether that was an issue in other missions.

Agenda item 123: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 *(continued)*

Budget constraints and support service reductions (continued)

48. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller), in reply to the statement by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Group of 77 and China made at the Committee's forty-fourth meeting, said that recent reductions in services were not in contravention of General Assembly resolution 56/254, but in compliance with it. It was the responsibility of the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures to administer the budget adopted by the General Assembly; otherwise he would be derelict in his duty. The budget as adopted was $75 million lower than the requested level, but no programme cutbacks or reductions in posts had been approved. Since the resolution was very clear about where the cuts should be applied and reaffirmed that the vacancy rate should not be used, there was no room left to manoeuvre. The Secretariat had three choices in implementing the budget: to increase productivity, reduce services or overspend the budget. The third choice was not an option; the productivity increases which had been achieved over the previous three bienniums were not likely in the current biennium because of the cuts in expenditure for information technology, which had been the main source of the increased productivity. Thus, the Secretariat was left with no choice but to reduce services. The Chairman of the Advisory Committee had said that it did not appear possible to continue to do more with less, and it should not be surprising if it was not possible to accomplish all the activities contained in the budget.

49. **Mr. Alcalay** (Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed the deep concern of its members over whether they would be able to fulfil their commitments to their people in the current climate of service reductions. The Group also recognized the concerns of the Secretary-General over his ability to carry out important programmes for the same reasons, and was prepared to hold informal consultations on the subject to find a constructive way to deal with the situation.

50. The concerns at reductions in support services, which affected smaller Missions most severely, should be brought to the attention of the General Assembly, as the body which had approved the programme budget. He was hopeful that a harmonious and practical solution could be found in the informal consultations.

51. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It would like from the Secretariat a comparison of the resources allocated under each budget section for the bienniums 2000-2001 and 2002-2003 and the specific amounts that had been cut from the budget of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services (DGAACS). Member States would be directly affected by the cuts and he wondered why the representatives of the Programme Planning and Budget Division, who had been present at the consultations, had failed to call attention to their impact.

52. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) pointed out that the budget had been adopted by consensus, and that it actually represented a 3.5 per cent increase over the previous biennium. Efforts should focus on the best way to allocate resources and on the possibility of shifting funds to high-priority activities. As it was still early in the 24-month budget period, in a spirit of harmony, it should be possible to find a way to meet the needs of all within the budget parameters.

53. **Ms. Marston** (Jamaica) said that her delegation was particularly concerned at the effects of cuts in information technology services to Permanent Missions. It would like to receive information on the exact amount budgeted for information technology services to Missions, the number of staff members providing those services, whether any had been terminated, and whether there were any alternatives to the 24-hour services provided by outside contractors.

54. **Mr. Elgammal** (Egypt) said that his delegation shared the concerns regarding services provided to Missions and would like information about plans for the redeployment of human resources. While the information circular (ST/IC/2002/13) had indicated that pitcher water supply, elevator operator and coat attendant services would be cut, those services were still being provided. Therefore, he requested

clarification of which cuts had actually been implemented and which remained to be implemented.

55. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that the Secretariat shared the concerns expressed over how to live within the approved budget and deliver services. The Committee had devoted 14 formal meetings to the budget and had submitted 490 written requests for information to the Secretariat, which had provided 563 pages of information. The Committee's report (A/56/736) on the programme budget contained 18 pages of information on the cuts, which indicated that the Committee had been aware of the implications of its actions. More information on the information technology area would be provided in the informal consultations. No staff positions had been cut, but there had been a 15 per cent cut in contractual services and a 38 per cent cut in furniture and equipment. Regrettably, the resources were no longer available to do business as usual.

56. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that reductions could be effected in different ways and that, although the Secretariat had provided a great deal of information to Member States during the budget negotiations, it had not made clear at that time the specific reductions that would be necessary in every area of the budget. Referring to the comments made by the representative of the United States, he said that, as the budget had increased in nominal terms, it was all the more difficult to accept cuts in services that had been covered under the previous budget. Moreover, his delegation had made clear in the budget negotiations that it attached great importance to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. He was concerned that the cuts seemed to have a disproportionate impact on that Department and would like to compare the amounts allocated to it in the current and previous budgets because, to his knowledge, they were approximately the same. With regard to the withdrawal of services for night and weekend meetings, Member States would prefer not to hold meetings at such times, but circumstances sometimes forced them to do so.

Other matters

57. **Mr. Martella** (Assistant Chief of the Security and Safety Service), responding to concerns raised by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic at the Committee's previous meeting, said that the meeting to which the representative had been unable to gain access had been a special event to mark International Women's Day. The event had been heavily oversubscribed and, in the interests of safety, access had been restricted to specific groups and individuals. Moreover, so many people had been refused entry to the conference room that the corridors around it had also become congested. The United Nations Security and Safety Service alone controlled access to all rooms in the building and no security officers from outside the Organization had been present at the event in question. However, in accordance with the usual practice, some non-uniformed officers had been on duty.

58. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that United Nations security officers usually wore an easily identifiable uniform. On the occasion in question, however, some officers had been wearing a different uniform. He would therefore like to know whether the standard uniform had changed.

59. **Mr. Martella** (Assistant Chief of the Security and Safety Service) said that there were always some non-uniformed officers among the security staff at any event; they were used particularly to provide personal protection. Many high-profile figures had attended the International Women's Day event and a large number of non-uniformed officers had therefore been on duty. The two officers in charge of the security operation had served with the Organization for more than 20 years and were confident that all the officers on duty that day had identified themselves as United Nations security staff.

60. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the security officers had not identified themselves to him as United Nations security staff. While he had not been aware of the high-level nature of the event, he found it difficult to believe that more stringent security measures had been necessary than at other events attended by important figures, including Heads of State and Government. Given the large number of people wishing to attend, the event should have been held in a bigger room; representatives of Member States had been denied access without prior warning. Because of the congestion in the corridor, he had been forced to use a different door to enter the room in which the Committee had been meeting.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.